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BULLETIN

OF

THE PENNSYLVANIA MUSEUM

JULY, 1913

ELEVENTH YEAR

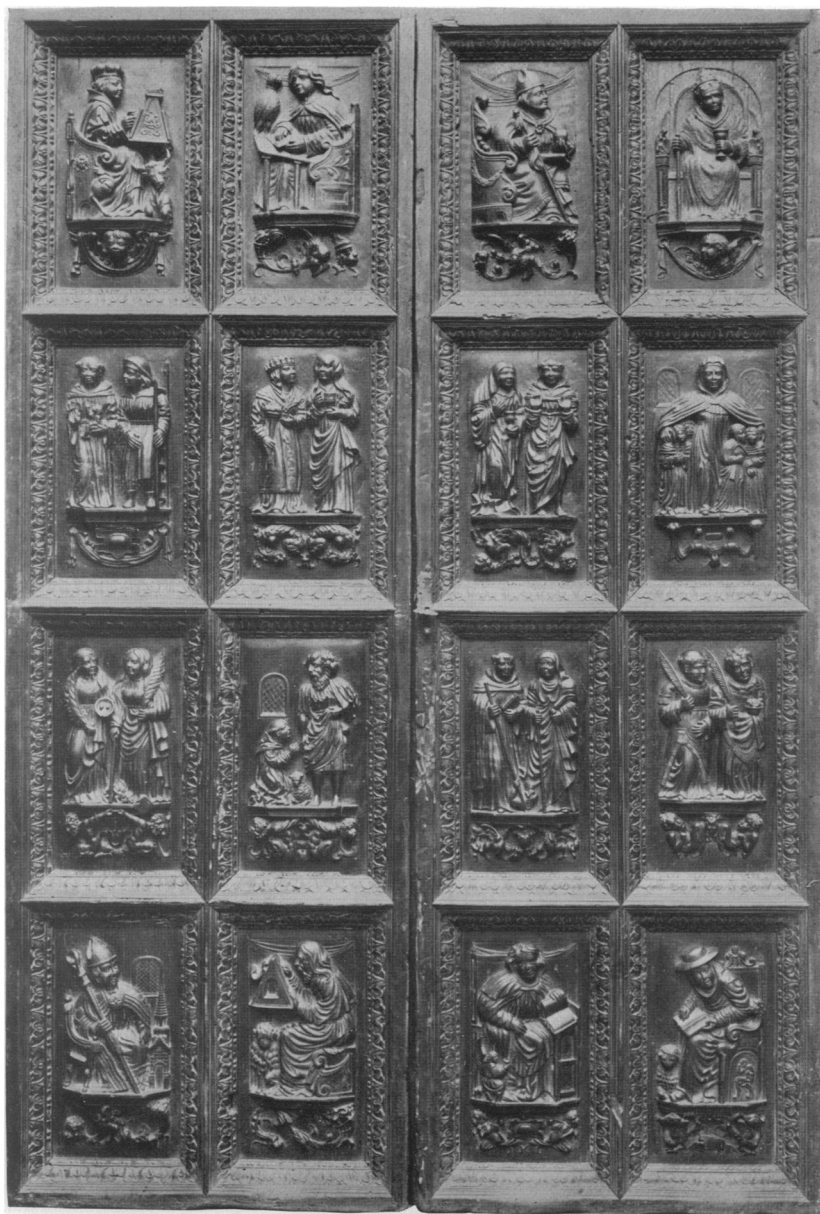
Number 43

OLD SPANISH CARVED DOORS

When traveling in California last winter, Mr. John T. Morris, to whom the Museum is already indebted for so many generous gifts, discovered a pair of old carved doors of Spanish workmanship, which he purchased and presented to the Museum. These handsome specimens of old Spanish decorative art came from the Convent of Santa Isabel at Toledo, and are said to be the work of monks of the sixteenth century.

They are of walnut wood, and the original wrought-iron latch is preserved. Each door is divided into eight sunken squares or sections, all of which are framed with a handsomely carved molding. In the centre of each panel, of which there are sixteen, are carved in relief figures of saints, many of which are accompanied by special symbols or attributes that reveal the intention of the artist, or at least afford a clue to it. For instance, the two evangelists at the top of the left hand door facing the reader in the picture are recognizable—one as St. Luke, by the ox at his side, and the other as St. John, by means of his eagle. The other two evangelists are found, one at the foot of the right hand door, where St. Matthew is symbolized by a human figure, and the other, St. Mark, by his lion, at the foot of the left hand door.

Another plainly identifiable figure is that of St. Jerome, who in art is always represented with a lion, whether he is shown naked in the desert, or dressed in his cell reading and wearing a cardinal's hat, as is here the case. He is at the foot of the right hand door, to the right of Matthew. The other three fathers of the Church, St. Augustine with his crozier to the extreme lower left of the left door, St. Ambrose holding the scourge, and St. Gregory with his papal tiara, at the top of the right hand door, are also represented. St. Felicitas, covering with her mantle her seven sons, only four of whom are seen in the carving, occupies the square below St. Gregory. She was a rich Roman widow who lived at the time of Marcus Aurelius' persecutions. One of her seven sons was daily put to death under her eyes before she herself was martyred. She is represented hooded as a widow, often bearing the martyr's palm; but her sons are her principal attributes. By her side are two saints. One is St. Francis with his characteristic knotted cord, holding up his hands, where he received the stigmata, as in blessing. St. James, patron saint of Spain, when



OLD SPANISH CARVED DOORS

not on his white charger is usually represented in a pilgrim's garb carrying a long staff. He is probably the saint next to St. Francis.

On the other door, third row from top, St. Lucy is identifiable by her salver on which are her eyes. These she herself cut out lest her admirer, who was haunted by their beauty, be tempted into sin. St. John the Baptist is next to her. Above him are two saints, one of whom, wearing the crown, is possibly St. Margaret. In the adjoining panel to the left is St. Vincent of Paul, bearing a child. With him probably is St. Lawrence, carrying his gridiron as conventionalized in some of his effigies. The model of a church denotes a founder, while the cup or chalice, if borne by a female figure, denotes Sta. Barbara, if by a man it indicates St. Benedict. The martyr's palm is the common attribute of all who have suffered death for the faith, and therefore cannot serve as a means of closer identification.

It is difficult to identify positively the figures that carry no specialized emblems, but one may fairly select in preference in such cases such saints as were most honored in Spain or were of univer-



CARVED PANELS
Showing Italian Influences

sal worship. While the execution of the carvings is somewhat crude, they have some merit. They are elaborate and typical of the art of the period they represent and are decidedly interesting.

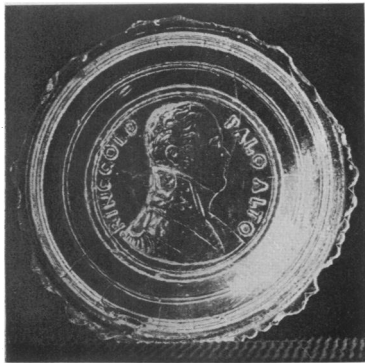
A pair of large carved panels given by Mr. Morris are probably of later date and may be imitated from models of Italian workmanship. They were evidently made for secular use. They are carved walnut with graceful garlands and clusters of flowers that recall the late Italian Renaissance. The Spanish note, however, is maintained by the lower parts of both panels, which are divided each into four sections, in the centre of each of which is boldly carved a grim helmeted warlike head that we are tempted to identify as that of a "conquistador." There are eight of these, which form so stern a basis for the graceful decorations of the top that one would naturally feel inclined to believe that the two parts did not belong together. But a careful examination of the heads used in the scrolls, as well as of the back places the matter beyond question, and it is the taste of the carver-artist that must be questioned in this singular production.

S. Y. S.



OLD AMERICAN PRESSED GLASS

The Mexican war of 1846 furnished numerous subjects for the American glass makers of the middle of the nineteenth century. Flasks and bottles were decorated with portrait busts of General Zachary Taylor, Major Ringgold and Captain Bragg, and lately a pressed glass cup plate, previously unknown to collectors, with head of Ringgold, commemorating the battle of Palo Alto, has been added to the Museum's collections. The battle of Palo Alto, Texas, was fought on May 8, 1846, on which occasion Major Ringgold's battery took an active part. The cup plate here figured probably appeared within the following year.



RINGGOLD CUP PLATE
Sandwich, Mass., 1846

Pressed glass was first produced at the Boston and Sandwich glass works in Sandwich, Mass., in 1827. One of the earliest patriotic designs made there is a circular salt cellar with the figure of the American eagle on the base, and sailing vessels and eagles around the sides. Others, of rectangular

form, bear on the sides the heads of Washington and Lafayette in relief, made probably in commemoration of the opening of the Erie Canal, on which occasion General Lafayette was present.